

Alkborough Flats Monthly Wildlife Report May 2022

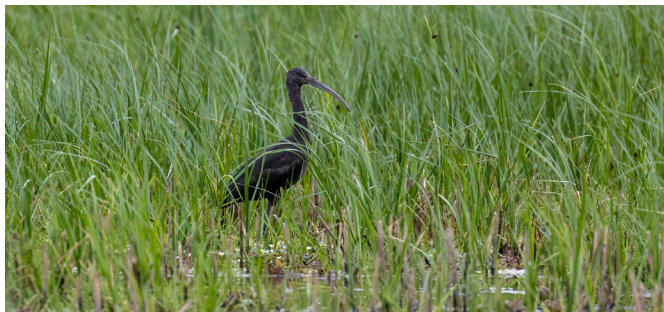
In the first-year post flooding, 2007, the Flats recorded three species of long-legged waterbirds Grey Heron, Little Egret peak of 11 in September and Spoonbill with a peak of five birds. As the site has developed other species have been added to the list with the first Bittern in 2008, first Great White Egret in 2010, first Cattle Egret in 2017 and first Glossy Ibis in 2021 while a Black Stork flew by in 2015. Numbers of most species and regularity of occurrence has increased substantially in recent years with the deeper flooding of the western part of the site and the continued presence of water through the summer months. Most of the above species occurred in May 2022 with a peak count of **28 Little Egrets**, the highest ever total for this month while the four booming **Bitterns** became less vocal but with three males seen in the air



together on the 7th being an exceptional observation. The **Grey Heron** nesting attempt unfortunately failed following disturbance but eight birds were fishing on the 19th. Three **Great White Egrets** over the period 5th – 7th included two breeding plumaged adults that subsequently stayed for most of the remainder of the month. **Spoonbill** numbers fluctuated widely but peaked at nine birds on a few dates with a greater number of individuals being involved in the sightings. Two colour ringed birds originated from the Netherlands as expected. Following the first record in 2021, a bird that stayed for five months, **Glossy Ibis** looks set to increase its Alkborough status quickly with



the second bird for the site arriving on the 7th for a one-day sojourn. Another second calendar year bird it seems most likely that it was one of the two birds an adult and a second calendar year that appeared on the 16th this time staying to the 19th and incredibly being joined by a



second adult on the 20th – 21st. The star of the heron tribe this month though was a second calendar year **Purple Heron** discovered skulking in the western reedbeds on the 19th having been seen at nearby Blacktoft Sands on the 17th it had presumably remained hidden at Alkborough



during the interim. Yet another first for the site it was certainly still present on the 22nd but was only ever seen

briefly in flight and could have therefore remained longer than was recorded. Purple Herons habitually hunt within



reedbeds and can be notoriously difficult to locate if they are not seen in flight and thus their status in Britain is probably under-recorded but even so there have been 32 Lincolnshire records most of them coastal. Six **Common Cranes** on the 8th continued the spring theme of increased local abundance with a singleton on the 31st.

Three broods of **Mute Swan** cygnets, 5,6 and 7 appeared and there were up to 34 immatures. **Gadwall**, up to 130 rising to 221 on 30th and **Mallard** 140 formed the bulk of the dabbling duck contingent after the rapid departure of the bulk of the 236 **Teal** seen on the 4th. Up to five **Wigeon**, mainly injured birds, lingered with the last two Pintail on the 4th. Up to six female **Shoveler** appeared to be breeding but **Garganey** sightings became less frequent with one to three drakes. **Tufted Ducks** melted away and the only **Pochard** record was of seven on the 7th. Two pairs of **Great Crested Grebes** attempted to nest but with no success by the month end but several broods of **Coot** hatched.

With the exception of the breeding **Marsh Harriers**, it was a pretty poor month for raptors with up to three **Hobbies** feeding on warm days and a pair of **Kestrels** showed signs of nesting while **Barn Owls** were regular. In a very unremarkable month for gulls and terns a **Little Gull** was present on the 14th and three **Arctic Terns** flew north on the 2nd. It was a pretty dire month for wader passage with peaks of 40 **Ringed Plover** and c50 **Dunlin** occasionally roosting on high spring tides with two **Sanderling** 19th and one 26th but much larger numbers fed on Trent Falls in the last two weeks. The 4th saw 41 **Black-tailed Godwits** on site with 17 to the 21st. The last seven Spotted Redshanks departed on the 4th when there were four **Greenshank** and two **Wood Sandpipers** the latter remaining to the 8th while the only **Common Sandpipers** were three on the 2nd.

After a poor showing in 2021 it was good to have two singing **Cuckoos** on site at the start of the month with



at least one female also in attendance and one of the males staying throughout the month. The **Green Woodpecker** wandered down onto the Flats from the adjacent hillside on the 28th. **Wheatears** presumably heading for Scandinavia continued to trickle through



with a peak of three on the 5th and the last 18th. With 30 occupied territories **Cetti's Warblers** were audibly very

much in evidence and it was a good month for **Sedge Warblers** with 58 territories identified. The first fledged broods of **Bearded Tits** appeared from the 20th.



The fortunes of most butterflies continue to decline but it was a decent month for **Wall Browns** with individuals



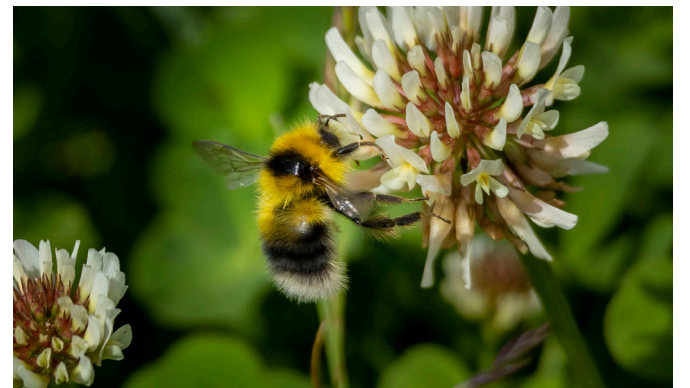
recorded from several locations. The first **Painted Lady** arrived on the 19th with **Red Admirals** and more Painted Ladies over ensuing days and the first **Small Copper** 17th. There was a good emergence of **Azure** and **Blue-tailed Damselflies** with 500+ of the latter species on the 8th and at least 80 **Azure Blues** on the 23rd. **Large Red Damselflies** continue to occur in small numbers



with eight on the 16th. The first **Hairy Dragonfly** was recorded on the 8th but numbers were limited as were



Four Spotted Chasers. The biggest invertebrate news though was the discovery of a **Heath Bumblebee** on the 28th only the third record of the species in Lincolnshire.



No doubt overlooked the species may prove to be regular on the white clover beds.

Graham Catley